

# AERONAUTICAL CHARTING FORUM

## Instrument Procedures Group

Meeting 15-01 – April 28, 2015

### RECOMMENDATION DOCUMENT

FAA Control # 15-01-320

**Subject:** Common Sounding Fix Names

**Background/Discussion:** Complaints have been made that common spelled or common sounding navigation fix names are being used in terminal areas that are causing confusion. Efforts have been made to enact change, but local facilities sometimes do not take notice because they have created the names and like them. In some cases, it does not seem to be a problem to an ATC controller, but quite often it is a struggle for the crew to get the correct spelling into a FMS in a timely manner. Recently, an airline crew was on radar vectors at KATL and was cleared direct SHELE to resume the ONYON arrival, but instead went direct SCHEL because it was on the assigned approach. At KDFW, multiple complaints of too many “Navy” fixes have been common. TRYTN SID has “NAVYE”, SEEVER STAR has fix “NAAVY”, and CQY8 STAR fix named “NAVYS”. All in the DFW terminal area. Additionally, there is another “NAVYY” in the KPHL area. Attempts were made at local level to fix the issue, however the fixes are popular in the ATC environment. While certain names and “string of names” are popular in some terminal areas, they can cause cockpit confusion and FMS entry error, or a deviation in track.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. APA acknowledges the vast amount of fixes in the NAS and current efforts to manage them. However, we would like to appeal to the group these decisions and try to find a way to resolve these occurrences when attempting to get them changed at a local level has failed. Perhaps the FAA Air Traffic Operations Oversight Division, or other FAA organizations responsible for addressing flight/air traffic safety, can assess these conditions and step in to resolve our concerns. Also, recommend a process be established to alert ATC facilities when these conditions are noted and require action.
2. Order JO 7400.2K, paragraph 3-3-4d, currently states: *“Five-letter names that are assigned by the Mission Support, Terminal Procedures and Charting Group and major commands will be coordinated with the associated ARTCC to preclude similar sounding fix names.”* We do not believe this paragraph is explicit enough to prevent similar sounding fix names from being in close proximity to one another. This paragraph should be expanded to include language similar to what is in paragraph 3-3-3b, regarding Navaid naming and placement, which states: *“The name must not sound similar to an existing NAVAID/fix location name within the originating ARTCC’s area, the adjacent ARTCC’s area, or within a 300 NM radius from the NAVAID involved.”* ATC facilities following this guidance for “fix naming” would prevent situations shown in the examples from happening.

#### **Comments:**

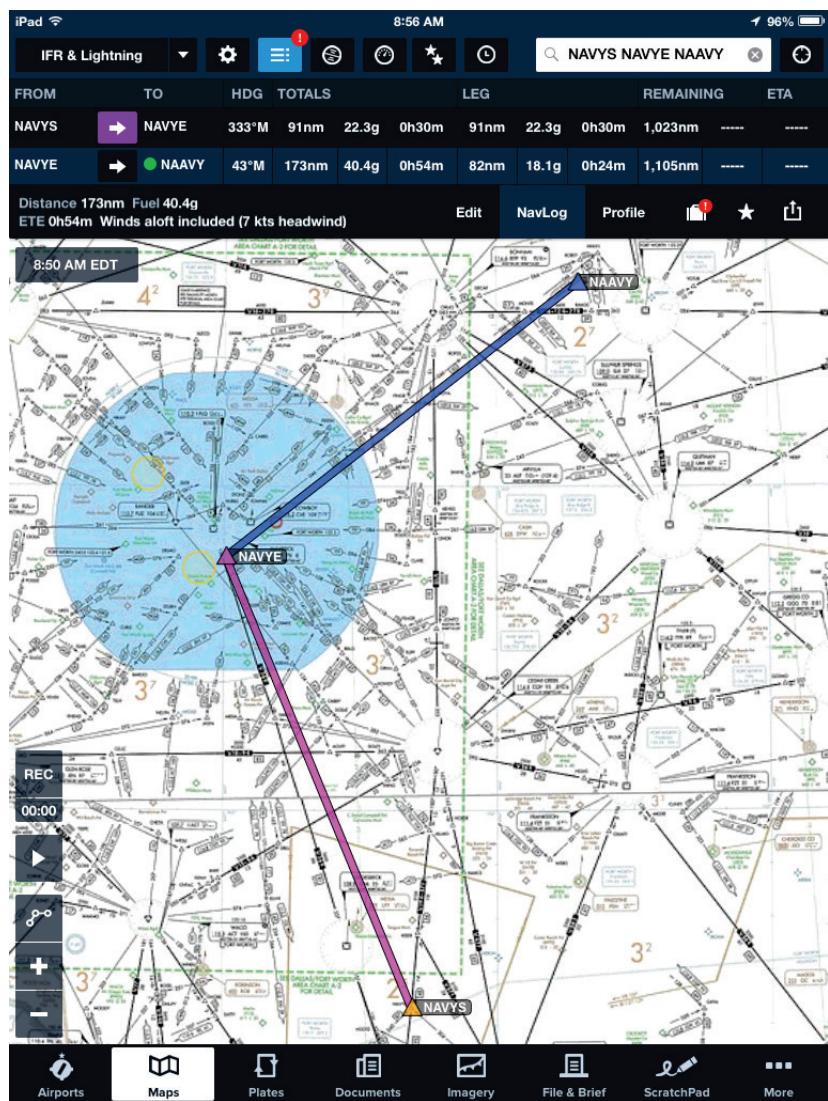
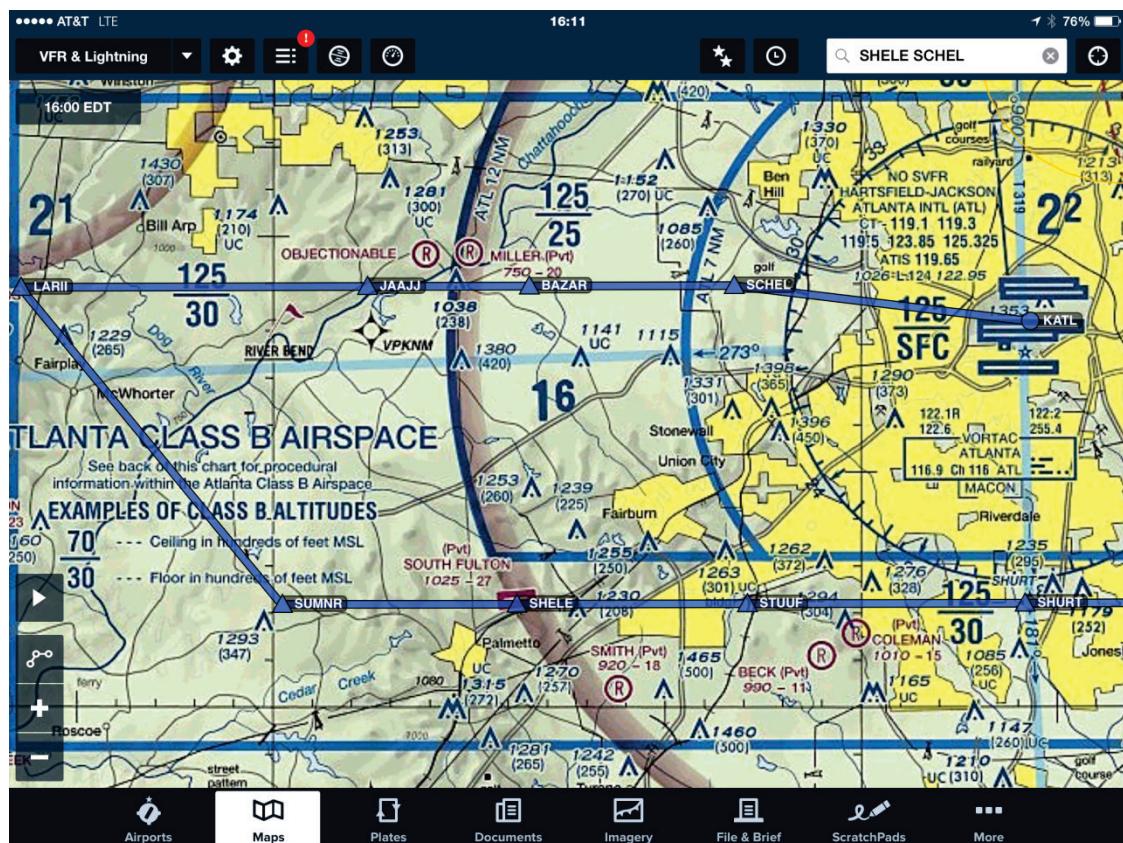
**Submitted by:** Lev Prichard

**Organization:** Allied Pilots Association

**Phone:** 817-302-2150

**E-mail:** lprichard@alliedpilot.org

**Date:** 8APR15



**Initial Discussion – MEETING 15-01:** Lev Prichard, Allied Pilots Association, briefed some examples of common sounding fix names in close geographic proximity, showing as examples three similar names in the Dallas area and two similar names in Atlanta. He said that when he questioned ATC about the three in Dallas, he was informed that the Navy veterans at the facility liked them. Lev acknowledged the massive number of fixes in the NAS and that finding all those with similar sounding names at inception is difficult, but there should be a mechanism to address when similar/confusing names/spellings are identified. A point was made that in the Dallas example, since the fixes are on different types of procedures, there should be no confusion. A spirited group discussion followed with pilot input that your procedure is often changed by ATC requiring a last minute data input into the navigation system during high work load periods, which is problematic if there are similar sounding/spelled fixes in close proximity, no matter what type of procedure the fix is tied to. A question was asked about when the aircraft is cleared to a new fix, shouldn't that fix be on the drop down list in the FMS (no confusion possible) since only one procedure is loaded in the FMS? Ted Thompson, Jeppesen, brought up the precedence of the Cali disaster with an airliner cleared to similar sounding named fix which put them into a mountain, so there is a foreseeable consequence. Gary Fiske, AJV-82, pointed out that when that procedure was designed in the days before FMS databases, aircraft could not have navigated to the wrong NAVAID/fix (not in conventional reception range), but conceded that we are in a new era. Further discussion ensued regarding how the aircraft's geographic position makes an easy cross check for the pilot and that even if the name is similar, the relative distance should indicate a problem. Rich Boll, NBAA, said he has noticed ATC issuing named fixes/WPs instead of headings for weather deviations which has pilots entering points not on their original flight plans. Lev proposed a solution of developing a process to alert the facility and require action, since there currently is not one. Tom Schneider, AFS-420, suggested an addition to Order JO 7400.2K, adding guidance to what is currently in paragraph 3-3-3d, for NAVAIDS, looking for similar sounding names within 300 NM, which prompted more group discussion. Mike Wallin, NFDC, said that when NFDC gets a name request, they do a search and if exact spelling is in use anywhere they deny. If spelled differently (slightly), he has no way of knowing whether a fix with a similar sounding name is located in close geographic proximity. Mike said the local facilities should be cognizant of their own airspace, identify potential problem fix names, and address the issue in the interest of safety. Gary took an IOU to address the specific fix name issues at Dallas and Atlanta, and if any other very specific obviously problematic issues exist, bring them to his attention. Tom mentioned the NASA reporting system and the Aviation Safety (AVS), Air Traffic Operations Safety Oversight Division, which visits facilities, could address these circumstances too. Tom again mentioned Order JO 7400.2 existing language (policy guidance), inquiring if it can be strengthened, and is there a searchable mileage distance to scan for similarities. Mike said he is not sure who is the OPR in NDFC for that item but will take the IOU to research, and if any committees exist will join.

**Status:** Gary took an IOU to address the specific fix name issues at Dallas and Atlanta. Mike will take the IOU to research. **Item open:** AJV-8 (Gary Fiske)/ NFDC (Mike Wallin)

*Editor's note: Later in the day Mike Wallin added that he had obtained draft language for the Order JO 7400.2, regarding similar sounding fix names, and there is proposed text that will read: "Fixes, WPs and LOMs are developed by Air Traffic, terminal products, DOD and third party developers and must not sound similar to existing fixes, WPs or NAVAIDs named within the originating ARTCC area, the adjacent ARTCC area, or within 300 NM of each location..."*

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**MEETING 15-02:** Gary Fiske, AJV-82, discussed changes in the works concerning a number of previously identified similar sounding fix names in close geographic proximity, giving dates when changes will occur. NFDC already has proposed changes to guidance language in FAA Order 7400.2, (a copy is in the minutes of ACF 15-01). Item will remain open for one more cycle.

**Status:** Report status at next meeting. **Item Open: AJV-82 (Gary Fiske).**

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